

God-Ordained Institutions: Civil Government, Part 2

Introduction

Family—Creation
Civil Government—Fall
Church—Redemption

Civil Government—Fall
Humanity's fallen nature makes necessary some kind of restraining authority.

The most basic function of civil government is to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right (1 Peter 2:14; Romans 13:3).

The sin plague infects every human being but Jesus, and therefore taints every human government but His.

No human government will ever be perfect till Jesus reigns. He is the only perfect Human.

God has ordained civil government, so believers submit to its authority because of our submission to His (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:9-17).

God has ordained civil government for good purpose, so He holds both the governed and the governing accountable. All peoples and

nations answer to Him. (Prophets, Proverbs, Psalms)

God not only raises up nations and their leaders; He also takes them down. (Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah)

When individuals and/or a people repent of their sin, God forgives them (e.g., Nebuchadnezzar, Nineveh).

Tonight, we want to explore the extent of civil government's authority and responsibility.

- Civil Disobedience
- Just War
- Death Penalty
- Care for the Vulnerable/Poor

Civil Disobedience

Is there ever a time when we should disobey civil government?

Yes. When civil government calls us to disobey God.

1. When civil government forbids what God commands

Daniel 6—Do not pray to any deity except the king or you will be thrown into the lions' den.

Acts 5—Stop preaching Jesus or you will be thrown in jail.

2. When civil government commands what God forbids

Daniel 3—Worship the image Nebuchadnezzar set up or be thrown into the fiery furnace.

1 Timothy 2:1-2

¹ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

Just War

To rescue hostages

Genesis 14: Abraham and his servants rescue Lot and his family, along with other hostages.

¹⁴ When Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. ¹⁵ And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. ¹⁶ Then he brought back all the possessions, and also brought back his kinsman Lot with his possessions, and the women and the people.

To drive out foreign oppressors

Judges

To defend against invaders

Nehemiah 4

⁹ And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night. ¹³ So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people by their clans, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. ¹⁴ And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, "Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes."

Godly men of war: Joshua, the judges, David, Christ

John the Baptist's counsel to Roman soldiers who repented of sin.

Luke 3:14

Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."

Death Penalty

Genesis 9:6 (Noahic Covenant)

"Whoever sheds the blood of man,
by man shall his blood be shed,
for God made man in his own image.

Leviticus 24:17-21 (Mosaic Covenant)

17 "Whoever takes a human life shall surely be put to death. **18** Whoever takes an animal's life shall make it good, life for life. **19** If anyone injures his neighbor, as he has done it shall be done to him, **20** fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; whatever injury he has given a person shall be given to him. **21** Whoever kills an animal shall make it good, and whoever kills a person shall be put to death.

6th Commandment: You shall not murder.

Cities of Refuge for those who took a human life but not by murder—Exodus 21, Deuteronomy 4, Joshua 20

Romans 13:4 (New Testament)

For he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

Care for the Vulnerable and Poor

Individual Responsibility

Deuteronomy 15:7, 11

7 "If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, **8** but

you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be.

11 For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.'

Proverbs 14:31

Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.

Proverbs 19:17

Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed.

Proverbs 28:27

Whoever gives to the poor will not want, but he who hides his eyes will get many a curse.

James 1:27

Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Community Responsibility

Deuteronomy 14:28-29

28 "At the end of every three years you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in the same year and lay it up within your towns.

29 And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner,

the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.

Leviticus 19:9-10

⁹ "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. ¹⁰ And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 24:19-21

¹⁹ "When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. ²⁰ When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over them again. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. ²¹ When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not strip it afterward. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.

Church Responsibility

Ephesians 4:28

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own

hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.

Acts 4:34-35 (compare Acts 6:1)

³⁴ There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold ³⁵ and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

1 Timothy 5:3

Honor widows who are truly widows.

Government Responsibility

Proverbs 31:8-9 (to King Lemuel)

⁸ Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute.

⁹ Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.

More to say on this category as we talk about biblical justice issues. Important for us to understand biblical definitions of and directions for justice because different cultures skew what it is to fit the times and to advance their own agendas.